

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM® Text

Chapter 7, The Gifts of the Kingdom

Section II

The Law of the Kingdom

Overview of the Section

This section speaks of how our function in Heaven, which is creation, is adapted to this world in the form of *healing*. It shows how the Holy Spirit translates the unified and absolute principles of Heaven within the dualistic and relative world of our illusion, in order to prepare us for full awareness of the Kingdom, “the last step” that the preceding section discussed.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹To heal is the only kind of thinking in this world that resembles the Thought of God, and because of the elements they **share**, can transfer easily **to** it. ²When a brother perceives himself as sick, he **is** perceiving himself as **not whole**, and therefore **in need**. ³If you, too, see him this way, you are seeing him as if he were **absent** from the Kingdom or separated **from** it, thus making the Kingdom **itself** obscure to **both of you**. ⁴Sickness and separation are not of God, but the Kingdom **is**. ⁵If you obscure the Kingdom, you are perceiving **what is not of God**.

• Study Question •

1. *Suppose a friend comes to you and tells you, "I am sick and feel miserable today." How should you attempt to see this person in your mind, according to this paragraph?*

Through the instruction of the Holy Spirit, we are being restored to our function as co-creators with God in the heavenly realms. What does that look like while we are here on earth, still in the process of restoration? It looks like *healing*. When our minds are filled with thoughts of healing, and only then, our thoughts resemble God's Thought (1:1). When our minds are benevolent and compassionate, intent on relieving the suffering and sorrow of others, they are like God's Mind, because they share certain elements with God's Mind. This makes it possible for thoughts of healing to easily

transfer to the creative Thought of God (1:1). In other words, as we take part in the healing of the world, we are preparing ourselves to be “transferred” to the Higher Office of creation with God.

What follows gives an intriguing picture of what a healer *does*, in the view of the Course. What I find most interesting is that the rest of the paragraphs are not discussing any sort of behavior, or what we would normally conceive of as healing techniques. Instead, they discuss *perception!* Apparently, healing as the Course teaches it is a matter of arriving at the correct perception, pure and simple. The healer allows his or her own perception to be corrected, and in so doing, induces a similar change in the perception of the patient.

To be sick, as the Course sees it, is no more than *perceiving* oneself as sick, which entails perceiving oneself as “not whole” and “therefore in need” (1:2). What does a healer do? The healer chooses to allow his or her own perception of the sick person to be healed. He rejects the perception of sickness, incompleteness, and need, recognizing that to see a brother as sick is to see him as either outside the Kingdom of God or separated from it (1:3). Such a perception obscures the Kingdom for both the sick brother *and* for the potential healer (1:3,5), because “Sickness and separation are not of God...” (1:4). If you are seeing what is *not* of God, how can you see what *is* of God (the Kingdom)?

Paragraph 2

2. ¹To heal, then, is to correct perception in your brother **and** yourself by sharing the Holy Spirit with him. ²This places you both **within** the Kingdom, and restores **its** wholeness in your mind [minds]. ³This reflects [*parallels*] creation, because it unifies by increasing and integrates by extending. ⁴What you project or extend is real for you [*What you project you believe*]. ⁵This is an immutable law of the mind in this world as well as in the Kingdom. ⁶However, the **content** is different in this world [*its content is somewhat different in this world from what it really is*], because the thoughts it governs are **very** different from the Thoughts in the Kingdom. ⁷Laws must be adapted to circumstances if they are to maintain order. ⁸The outstanding characteristic of the laws of mind as they operate in this world is that by obeying them, and I assure you that you **must** obey them, you can arrive at diametrically opposed results. ⁹This is because the laws have been adapted to the circumstances of this world, in which diametrically opposed outcomes seem possible because you can respond to two conflicting voices [*in which diametrically opposed outcomes are believed in. The laws of mind govern thoughts, and you do respond to two conflicting voices*].

• Study Question •

2. *Paragraph 2 discusses the immutable law of mind, the main law of mind mentioned in the Course. What is this law of mind?*

According to the Course, healing means correcting “perception in your brother and yourself by sharing the Holy Spirit with him” (1:1). We discussed what it means to *share the Holy Spirit* with someone when the concept was first presented back in Section III of Chapter 5. There, we saw that sharing the Holy Spirit with a brother means *acknowledging* the Holy Spirit in him and seeing him as the Holy Spirit sees him. In this case, having to do with sickness, it means seeing our brother as lacking nothing and fully within the Kingdom of God.

Such vision sees both my brother and me within the Kingdom, and whole (2:2), which “reflects creation” (2:3). In other words, this corrected perception is what most closely parallels God’s creative Thought. Why? As the first paragraph told us, healing thought like this shares certain “elements” (1:1) with God’s Thought. Like creation, a healing thought “unifies by increasing and integrates by extending” (2:3). We extend healing to our brother by including him in the Kingdom, and we include him by extending the “bounds” of the Kingdom of God to include him.

Healing is an example of how the law of the Kingdom operates in this world. Jesus will now explain what that law is, and how it manifests. We should pay close attention to this “immutable law of mind” (2:5) presented here; it is the focal point of the whole section. This is how healing *works*. The *misuse* of this law is also, unfortunately, how the ego’s destruction (including sickness) is disseminated. This is the “law of the Kingdom” from which the section title is derived:

What you project or extend is real for you. (2:4)

Or, as the Urtext put it originally:

What you project you believe.

Remember that “The Holy Spirit extends and the ego projects” (T-6.II.4:3). This law, then, applies to both ego projection and Holy Spirit extension. It applies both in the world and in the Kingdom (2:5). Either way we employ this facility of mind, we believe the result and it becomes “real” for us; that’s the *law*. In the Kingdom this is the law of creation, having an unvarying outcome; our minds extend their thought, and the result is creation.

In the world, however, the law is “adapted to circumstances” of the world (2:7,9). It has a content very different than creation because the thoughts that govern the world are so different from those that govern Heaven (2:6–7). In the world, the result can go one of two completely different directions (2:8). We can extend, resulting in healing, or we may project, resulting in sickness and destruction. It all depends on which voice we listen to (2:9), the ego or the Holy Spirit.

Paragraph 3

3. 1Outside the Kingdom, the law that prevails inside is adapted to “What you project you believe.” 2This is its teaching form, because outside the Kingdom [Ur: teaching is mandatory because] learning is essential. 3This form [Ur: of the law clearly] implies that you will learn what you are from what you have projected onto others, and therefore believe they are. 4In the Kingdom there is no teaching or learning, because there is no belief. 5There is only certainty. 6God and His Sons, in the surety of being, know that what you extend [Ur: project] you are. 7That form of the law is not adapted at all, being the law of creation. 8God Himself created the law by creating by it. 9And His Sons, who create like Him, follow it gladly, knowing that the increase of the Kingdom depends on it, just as their own creation did.

• Study Question •

3. *This paragraph mentions two forms of the immutable law as expressed inside the Kingdom and outside the Kingdom. What are those two forms?*

“Outside the Kingdom,” learning is necessary, which requires teaching. The teaching form of the universal law of mind is, “What you project you believe” (3:1–2). This is the way the Holy Spirit adapts the universal law to our circumstances. This form of the law was discussed earlier (T-6.III.2:9), where it formed the basis of the reason why we must teach only the one lesson of love. What we project we believe, and thus what we teach we learn. Whatever we project onto others becomes “real” to us; we believe in it. When we project attack onto others, we believe in attack; when we extend healing, healing becomes real for *us*.

We also saw, in that earlier chapter, that we discover what is in our mind by what *extends from* it (T-6.III.1:2). Thoughts begin in our mind and then extend or project outward, where they take on form. We perceive those forms, and they inform us about the nature of our thoughts. The same thought is echoed here. We teach ourselves what *we* are from what we have projected onto others, and therefore believe that *they* are (3:3). Of course, we can teach ourselves incorrectly if we project untruths onto others.

That is how the law applies *outside* the Kingdom. “In the Kingdom” (3:4) it is different. If “outside the Kingdom” means anywhere within this world of illusion, then “in the Kingdom” refers to Heaven, or the realm of formless spirit. In that realm, knowledge is perfect and complete; only certainty exists (3:5), and therefore teaching and learning, being unneeded, do *not* exist (3:4). The law of mind operates in Heaven without any element of teaching or learning. It exists there simply as, “What you extend you are” (3:6), which is not an *adaptation* of the law. It *is* the law of creation (3:7). God and His Sons do not need to *learn* what they are because they already *know* it in “the surety of being” (3:6). In Heaven, we know what we are, and we extend it. That *is* creation. The law of creation came into existence when God extended His Being as His creations. He

“created the law by creating by it” (3:8). In Heaven, God’s Sons create in the same way, thus increasing the Kingdom (3:9).

Let me point out something here that isn’t the main point, namely, that twice this paragraph speaks of “His Sons,” plural. We know from elsewhere that there is “only one Son” (T-2.VII.6:1). Why, then, is the word plural here? If we are to be true to the entire Course, we have to adjust our thinking to its dual usage of this word, sometimes singular, sometimes plural. When plurality serves the meaning better the Course simply uses it. Here, in discussing the “increase” of the Kingdom, a multiplicity of Sons fits the picture better. There is some sense in which there are many Sons. There is some kind of “partness” in the “wholeness” that the Course so often emphasizes.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Laws must be communicated if they are to be helpful. ²In effect, they must be translated for those who speak different languages [a different language]. ³Nevertheless [But], a good translator, although he must alter the form of what he translates, never changes the meaning. ⁴In fact, his whole purpose is to change the form so that the original meaning is retained. ⁵The Holy Spirit is the translator of the laws of God to those who do not understand them. ⁶You could not do this yourself because a conflicted mind cannot be faithful to one meaning, and will therefore change the meaning to preserve the form.

• Study Question •

4. *This paragraph tells us that the Holy Spirit is a translator who translates the laws of God into a language we can understand. What do you think the original language of God is? (Hint: It isn't King James English!) Into what language does the Holy Spirit translate the language of God?*

In our dualistic, relative world, how can we possibly relate to an idealistic law such as, “What you extend you are”? We are so far from “surety of being” (3:6) that we *don't know* what we are; that is the very thing we need to rediscover.

You are only love, but when you deny this, you make what you are something you must learn to remember (T-6.III.2:3).

Therefore, if it is to be helpful to us, this “immutable law of mind” (2:5) has to be communicated to us in some form we can understand, much as words need to be translated from one language to another for those who do not speak the original language (4:1–2).

What does a good translator do? “His whole purpose” is to *communicate the original meaning*, even though, in order to do that, he must change *the form* of the words (4:3–4). If I want to communicate to someone in French the simple thought, “I love Paris,” I have to put that into French words: “J'adore Paris.” The form changes; the meaning stays the same. Often, perfect translation simply isn't possible. We have a common saying that

something “loses in the translation,” which signifies that some of the original meaning does not get conveyed by the altered form.

The Holy Spirit has the job of translating the laws of God for us, altering the form yet, as much as is possible, retaining the original meaning (4:4–5). “What you extend you are” becomes “What you project you believe,” or as it was put in the previous chapter, “As you teach so will you learn” (T-6.III.2:7¹). We cannot understand God’s laws on our own because our minds, being conflicted, “cannot be faithful to one meaning” (4:6). We will garble the translation; we will try to preserve the form at the expense of the meaning.

Let’s consider an example of preserving form at the expense of meaning. In language translation you might try to preserve the form by keeping the same word, or doing what is often called “word-for-word” translation. My favorite humorous example of that comes from a time when, as a college student, I was visiting a French family for dinner with another American student, a young woman I’ll call Jill. As the dinner neared completion, the hostess asked Jill if she would like another helping of food. Jill wanted to reply, “No thanks, I’m full.” She made the mistake of keeping the form and not the meaning when she replied, in French, “No, merci; je suis pleine.” The whole French family burst into laughter!

The word “pleine” means, literally, “full.” Jill had the form correct, so she thought. What she did not know was that in French idiom, when a woman says, “Je suis pleine,” it *means* “I’m pregnant.” Jill had preserved the form at the expense of the content.

If we try to understand God’s laws without the help of the Translator, we will make similar mistakes. Another way of expressing the same general idea is that we will hold to the letter of the law while totally missing the *spirit* of the law, just as the Pharisees did when they accused Jesus of breaking the law against working on the Sabbath when he healed someone on the Sabbath day. They were preserving the form at the expense of the content.

In my opinion, Course students fall prey to this error when they take the “immutable law” that “what you project you believe,” and apply it by asking a sick person, “How did you manifest this?” When someone uses the teaching that the world is an illusion to avoid helping a brother in need, that is another example of form at the expense of content. As the Bible has said:

If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? (James 2:15–16 NRSV)

“How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?” (1 John 3:17 NRSV)

¹ The same idea has been stated in several different ways in preceding chapters, for instance: T-5.IV.6:4; T-6.I.6:1-2, T-6.V(C).6:2, and T-7.I.5:1-2

Paragraph 5

5. ¹The Holy Spirit's purpose in translating is [naturally] exactly the opposite. ²He translates only to preserve the original meaning in all respects and in all languages. ³Therefore, He opposes the idea that differences in form are meaningful [He opposes differences in form as meaningful], emphasizing always that *these differences do not matter*. ⁴The meaning of His message is always the same; [and] only the meaning matters. ⁵God's law of creation [in perfect form] does not involve the use of truth to convince His Sons of truth. ⁶The extension of truth, which is the law of the Kingdom, rests only on the knowledge of what truth is. ⁷This is your inheritance and requires no learning at all, but when you disinherited yourself you became a learner of necessity [you became learners].

• Study Question •

5. *What does Jesus mean when he says, "God's law of creation does not involve the use of truth to convince His Sons of truth" (5:5)?*

Our split minds tend to change the meaning to preserve the form; the Holy Spirit's purpose is "naturally exactly the opposite" (5:1): His translations always preserve meaning and don't care about differences in form (5:2–3). Not only is He unconcerned about differences in form, He actively "*opposes the idea* that differences in form are meaningful" (2:3, my emphasis). This is something we can apply to things such as differences in the ways that various spiritual paths express their truth: the difference in form does not matter, what counts is the content, the meaning.

In fact, the Course itself presents the Holy Spirit's message in a wide variety of forms, offering different forms that different people can understand and accept. "The meaning of His message is *always* the same, and *only* the meaning matters" (5:4).

The last half of the paragraph illuminates the very different ways in which God's Truth functions in creating in the Kingdom (one-mindedness) versus learning in the world. When, in sentence 5, Jesus says that the law of creation "in perfect form does *not* involve the *use* of truth to convince His Sons of truth," he is talking about how truth functions in the Kingdom, or in Heaven—in a mind aware only of Oneness (cf. T-18.VI.1:5-6). There, truth is not *used* to convince anyone of truth. No one needs to be convinced; the Sons of Truth (those who have returned to perfect, nondual awareness) *know* the truth by direct understanding, and simply *extend* truth (5:6). That knowing that is part and parcel of our being is "your inheritance and requires no learning at all"; it was built into our very being by God when He created us. However, when we *disinherited* ourselves, we lost touch with this inherent knowledge, and therefore became beings who need to learn that which we formerly knew with certainty (5:7). Here, then, the Holy Spirit does use truth to convince us of Truth. That is why He must translate the laws of God into forms we can understand.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹No one questions the [intimate] connection of learning and memory. ²Learning is impossible without memory since it must be consistent to be remembered [Learning is impossible *without* memory, because it *cannot* be consistent *unless* it is remembered]. ³That is why the Holy Spirit's teaching is a lesson in remembering [That is why the Holy Spirit *is* a lesson in remembering]. ⁴I said before that He teaches remembering and forgetting, but the forgetting [aspect] is only to make the remembering consistent. ⁵You forget in order to remember better. ⁶You will not understand His translations while you listen to two ways of interpreting [perceiving] them. ⁷Therefore you must forget or relinquish one to understand the other. ⁸This is the only way you can learn consistency, so that you can finally *be* consistent.

• Study Question •

6. *Jesus told us before that the Holy Spirit teaches remembering and forgetting in T-5.II.6. Read that over now, and use it and the paragraph above to answer this question: What are we to remember, and what are we to forget?*

Learning and memory are intimately connected (6:1). Plato held that knowledge is innate or inborn, and that it must not therefore be imparted (since it is already there in the mind of the knower), but rather it must be drawn out, recalled, or remembered; that, I believe, may be implied in Jesus's words. But there is another sense in which learning and memory are connected, and that seems to be the sense intended here: To learn something you have to be able to remember it; if you can't remember it, it isn't available to you consciously. Therefore, you have not learned it. "Learning...*cannot* be consistent *unless* it is remembered." Yet the Course often makes the point that we are not really learning anything; we are *unlearning* falsehoods, and as we do, the truth emerges of itself. We *remember* what we once knew, and will know again.

It is the function of God's teachers to bring true learning to the world. Properly speaking it is unlearning that they bring, for that is "true learning" in the world (M-4.X.3:6-7).

When the Course says, "You forget in order to remember better" (6:5), clearly it means, "You forget the ego's teaching in order to remember the Truth better." If you continue to listen to the ego's voice, and to the ego's way of interpreting the Holy Spirit's translations of God's laws, you will never understand their true meaning. You *must* forget one to understand the other (6:6-7). This seems to be a reiteration of the concepts presented in T-6.V(C), "Be Vigilant *Only* for God and His Kingdom." As that third lesson of the Holy Spirit did, this paragraph emphasizing "the dichotomy between the desirable and the undesirable" (T-6.V(C).3:4), the absolute *either/or* that characterizes our choice between ego and Holy Spirit. Only by choosing to forget or relinquish the ego can we

learn consistency in order that we can finally *be* consistent—one, single-minded, settled in unitive awareness (6:8).

Paragraph 7

7. ¹What can the perfect consistency of the Kingdom mean to those who are confused? ²It is [*must be*] apparent that confusion *interferes* with meaning, and therefore *prevents the learner from appreciating it*. ³There is *no* confusion in the Kingdom, because there *is* only one meaning. ⁴This meaning comes from God and *is* God. ⁵Because it is also *you*, you share it and *extend it as your Creator did*. ⁶This needs no translation because it is perfectly understood, but it *does* need extension because it *means* extension. ⁷Communication [*here*] is perfectly direct and perfectly united. ⁸It is totally free [*without strain*], because nothing discordant *ever* enters. ⁹That is why it *is* the Kingdom of God. ¹⁰It belongs to Him and is therefore *like* Him. ¹¹That *is* its reality, and nothing *can* assail it.

• Study Question •

7. *How can you apply the teaching of this section to your life, today? What practical step or steps can you take to work toward more consistently listening to the Holy Spirit rather than to your ego?*

The first line, I believe, is underscoring the fact that as long as we are confused—by which Jesus means listening to two voices, two different interpretations of the truth from ego and Holy Spirit—as long as we are confused, we cannot appreciate or really understand the perfect consistency of the Kingdom (7:1). Confusion interferes with meaning, that has to be obvious (7:2). There is a passage in Workbook Lesson 169, speaking of the idea that our journey is really already over and that we are only reliving it, that expresses this quite graphically:

Those in time can speak of things beyond, and listen to words which explain what is to come is past already. Yet what meaning can the words convey to those who count the hours still, and rise and work and go to sleep by them? (W-pI.169.10:3–4).

...while you think that part of you is separate, the concept of a oneness joined as one is meaningless (T-25.I.7:1).

We simply cannot grasp the meaning while our minds are inconsistently listening to two voices. We can speak of these things and listen to explanations, but as long as we continue to govern our lives by the ego's teaching, viewing things from the perspective of separation, we won't be able to really understand what Oneness is.

The Kingdom of God is utterly consistent; there is only one meaning (7:3). It is a meaning that comes from God and *is* God (7:4). I like that! The meaning *is* God; God is the meaning. The way I understand that is that God's Being, God's Essence, defines

reality. As the Bible says, God “is above all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:6). Or as the Course itself puts it:

Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven, because that is where the laws of God operate truly, and they can operate only truly because they are the laws of truth. But seek this only, because you can find nothing else. There *is* nothing else. God is All in all in a very literal sense. All being is in Him Who is all Being (T-7.IV. 7:1-5).

That is the reality of Heaven...or perhaps I should simply say, that is Reality. That's the Truth. “There *is* nothing else.” Although this seems very abstract and perhaps speaking of something beyond your grasp, yet because God is All in All, whatever is said of God and of the Kingdom applies as well *to you!* You share it and extend it (7:5). You *must* extend it to be it “because it *means* extension” (7:6).

This is a message the Course echoes over and over again: God is Love. You are created in God's image and likeness; God is Love and therefore, so are you. Love's only need is to extend itself, to share itself, to give itself. Therefore, when you are identified with God and recognize your true nature, you will extend yourself, share yourself, give yourself just as God does. You will do so because you are one with God Who does so.

In this Oneness of unitive awareness,

Communication is perfectly direct and perfectly united. It is totally without strain, because nothing discordant *ever* enters. That is why it *is* the Kingdom of God. It belongs to Him and is therefore like Him. That is its reality, and nothing can assail it (7:7–11).

Jesus, from his experience of that perfect Oneness, is trying to explain to us what it is like. Here is our Elder Brother telling us what it is like to know your union with God, to know it at the deepest level in every fiber of your being. This isn't some exalted state of being awaiting us in the distant future. This is *now*. This is reality. This *is* the Kingdom of God, and that Kingdom is within us now. Nothing can assail it. It is, as Jesus announced nearly 2000 years ago, “at hand.” As Tennyson wrote:

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet —
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

Answer Key

1. See your friend as whole and as in the Kingdom of God; try not to see him or her as sick, not whole, or absent and separated from the Kingdom of God. If you find yourself perceiving what is not of God, ask for a corrected perception.
2. The law of mind is, "What you project or extend is real for you" (2:4). The Course also expresses this law in several other forms: What you project you believe (T-6.III.2:9); what you extend you are (T-7.II.3:6); what you teach you are (T-6.IV.11:7).
3. Outside: What you project you believe. Inside: What you extend you are.
4. The original language of God is the language of certainty, of knowledge, and of oneness or nonduality. The Holy Spirit translates this language into the language of our world, which is one of belief (as opposed to certainty), of perception (as opposed to direct knowing), and of duality (as opposed to oneness), which can be interpreted by either of "two conflicting voices."
5. In Heaven, God doesn't need to use truth to convince His Sons of truth because they already *know* the truth. Heaven is the realm of knowledge, and God's Sons share in His knowledge; therefore, they need no convincing. This is made clear by the next two sentences, in which we are told that "the extension of truth" (the activity of Sons of God in Heaven) "rests only on the knowledge of what truth is" and "requires no learning [i.e., convincing] at all." This is contrasted with our world, a world in which "learning is essential" (3:2). In this world, the Holy Spirit *must* use truth, in its translated form, to convince us of the truth of who we really are.
6. T-5.II.6:1. We are to *remember* God and the truth of who we are through listening to the Holy Spirit; we are to *forget* the illusions of the ego through refusing to listen to the ego.
7. Your personal reply is for your own benefit.